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**PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY, RESEARCH, AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY**

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As the authors state in their introduction, "child psychologists, concerned as they are with the study of normal human behavior and development during childhood and adolescence, are in a particularly appropriate position to contribute" to the understanding, control, and therapy of adolescent delinquent behavior. What contributions have psychologists actually made to this end? Where have they failed? And what is the prospect for future, important contributions? In this paper, the authors consider these questions, pointing to the paths of study which they feel offer the greatest promise for the accumulation of reliable scientific evidence concerning the etiology of delinquency.

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It is doubtful if juvenile delinquency has ever before received the thunderous attention it is now getting. From sources ranging from pulpits to "slick" magazines come opinions, exhortations, and counsel, but less frequently simple presentations of the facts on the issue. Professional people are subject to great (but justifiable) pressure to do research in both the etiology and therapy of juvenile criminality, and the number of man-hours invested in such research has increased in response to these demands. Unfortunately, however, it does not follow that the quality of the product parallels the quantity. An honest and self-critical examination of the net result of these many research efforts leaves the evaluator disappointed. The bulk of research in juvenile delinquency treats at a superficial level what many already knew or suspected. Critical questions, such as those about the developmental processes that result in delinquency, the "triggering" of a given delinquent act, the mediation of social forces so that the result is delinquent behavior, have not only been *unanswered*, but rarely even *asked*.

As a social problem, crime logically and necessarily comes to the attention of several professional

fields. It may be approached from a legal point of view, a religious or ethical point of view, a sociological point of view, or a psychological point of view. Such differing approaches to the study of delinquency and crime are not independent, but closely interrelated. It is the psychological approach to the study of juvenile delinquency which is to be examined here. Such an approach both appropriates from and contributes to other approaches to criminality.

Like law, religion, and sociology, psychology is interested in the operation of social systems among human beings. Like religion, more than like sociology or law, psychology is essentially concerned with the individual himself and is addressed centrally to the processes within and around the individual which give rise to specific forms of behavior. Criminal behavior is assumed to be but one abstracted segment of all human behavior, and it is assumed that scientific principles which govern human behavior in general also govern criminal behavior in specific. As a scientist, the contemporary psychologist holds that behavior is lawfully determined. In his role as scientist (though not necessarily as a citizen),

guilt or responsibility for criminal behavior are not directly ascribed to the individual himself. Specification of the conditions under which an individual may be regarded as culpable for his behavior constitutes a legal or philosophical question rather than a scientific one. The psychologist accepts legal distinctions between sanity and insanity on the basis of arbitrary criteria and definitions; but he holds that man's behavior is shaped to a large degree by external forces, both contemporary and historical, over which (even as an adult) he often has no control and for which he may have no responsibility.

In legal history, one may trace the incorporation of psychological knowledge into the law concerning legal culpability. In the practice of law, the ascription of the origin of criminal behavior to forces beyond control of the individual ordinarily constitutes limits for his legal culpability for the criminal act. The House of Lords' decision in *M'Naghten's Case* in 1843 established the long-standing precedent for determining legal insanity by the "knowledge of right and wrong" test. Eighty years later Clarence Darrow became a potent force in the movement for revised standards of culpability, and his utilization of psychiatric testimony in the Loeb-Leopold trial in 1924 represents a milestone in the progressive integration of psychological knowledge and law. His distinction between "legal insanity" and "mental disease," along with his argument that both relieve the individual of personal culpability for criminal behavior, underlies more recent judicial decisions such as that of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals in *Durham v. United States* in 1954. Other courts have recognized "irresistible impulse" as outside the limits of legal culpability.

The twentieth century has brought about significant reform of penal practices through the amalgamation of legal and psychological approaches to criminality. The Code of Hammurabi states the penalties for social transgression largely in terms of reciprocal treatment or "getting even" with the offender, but this is gradually being supplanted by a philosophy of penal practice based on efforts to rehabilitate or "repair" the faulty make-up of the offender. Punishment comes second to the attempt to reshape the criminal into an acceptable and constructive member of society.

Despite a great degree of mutual dependence, legal, religious, sociological, and psychological approaches to crime differ in emphasis: they use

different procedures, they have different goals, and they emphasize different aspects of the total human being. The position taken here reflects the conviction that scientific psychology can make valuable contributions, both directly and through other approaches, to the analysis and understanding of criminal and delinquent behavior. Child psychologists, concerned as they are with the study of normal human behavior and development during childhood and adolescence, are in a particularly appropriate position to contribute to this endeavor. The ideas presented here derive from a self-conscious attempt to evaluate the contributions, past, present, and future, that child psychologists may be able to make to the study of delinquent behavior.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

A serious problem confronting anyone doing research on juvenile delinquency concerns the definition of the term. One may be inclined to make the naive assumption that "delinquent behavior" is readily identifiable, but this is not at all true. For example, the overt manifestations of delinquent behavior may differ widely, even within a common culture, as a function of social class differences in the family background of the youth. The "sowing of wild oats" in the behavior of the middle-class youth may be glossed over by parents who arrange for dismissal of court proceedings; on the other hand, the same behavior in the lower-class youth often constitutes grounds for court action and a police record or even a penal sentence. Thus, great differences are to be expected in the statistical estimates of the incidence of delinquent behavior as a function of social class, especially when such estimates are derived from police or court records. The clearly recognizable "gang" of the lower-class delinquent may be supplanted for the middle-class youth by a group of only one or two pals who meet at the local drive-in restaurant during college vacations or after school. The middle-class delinquent often has access to an automobile, whereas the lower-class delinquent does not. The street gang in New York may be supplanted by the automobile club in Los Angeles.

Among the arbitrary criteria for defining delinquent behavior, one commonly employed for research purposes is that of legal conviction and sentencing. Other researchers use the criterion of court appearances or records of arrest, regardless

of their outcome. However, because police practices and court functions differ from one city to another, or for one social class or ethnic group as compared to another, such definitions suffer limitations. Dependent and neglected children are more likely to be booked and committed than children with families intact. Such facts lead to the demonstration of spurious relations between family structure and delinquency or between social class and delinquency.

Other criteria for defining delinquency include the use of judgmental ratings of behavior by teachers, social workers, or others in close contact with adolescents. Delinquency may be defined for the rater in a very general manner, or it may be defined explicitly in terms of specific kinds of behavior such as aggression, property destruction, or dishonesty. Other researchers, instead of using judgmental ratings by others, may seek behavioral assessment directly from the adolescent, asking him to describe his own behavior in terms of similar dimensions. Still other research workers may base their definition of delinquency on certain assumptions about the attitudes and values held by the adolescent, with empirical and normative research called upon to determine the nature of attitudes and values normally held by socially accepted adolescents.

All of these definitions can be useful for research purposes, but serious problems arise in the integration of research findings from various sources. One cannot superficially combine evidence that delinquency (by one definition) is related, for example, to intelligence, with evidence that delinquency (by some other definition) is related to social class, without taking careful account of each of the definitions employed.

In order to deal comprehensively with psychological research related to juvenile delinquency, a rather broad and unspecific definition of delinquency must be adopted here. A definition of *normality* of characteristics of personality and social behavior in the adolescent may be derived from purely statistical normative bases. Under a cultural bias defining social acceptability, then, deviation on the positive or "socially acceptable" side of this norm may be incorporated into a definition of non-delinquency. On the other hand, adolescents whose social and personality characteristics deviate to a large degree from the population norm in a socially undesirable direction may be categorically regarded as juvenile delin-

quents. While such a residual definition would itself have limited utility for research purposes, it is sufficiently broad to include a wide range of psychological research activities which bear upon juvenile delinquency.

Psychological study of juvenile delinquency is by no means new. Virtually all approaches to delinquent and criminal behavior have touched upon psychological issues and dealt with psychological variables, and there have been many direct efforts to approach the problem of juvenile misbehavior psychologically. Most of these attempts are psychoanalytic in point of view, and typically they make use of the small sample case history approach. Freudian psychoanalytic theory provided major impetus to the scientific study of early childhood experience as the foundation for later behavior. This, logically enough, led to the study of the young child and his pre-criminal or delinquent behavior. August Aichorn, Bruno Bettelheim, and Fritz Redl were all pioneers in the psychoanalytic study of disturbed and delinquent children.

In recent years, study of normal human psychological development within conceptual frameworks other than psychoanalysis has developed rapidly. While it is true that relatively little attention has been directed to the study of juvenile criminality along these newer lines, their potential contributions seem promising.

The cross-cultural method in psychological research has proved valuable in understanding many kinds of human social behavior, especially those that deviate from the norms and standards of a particular culture. The psychologist occupies a peculiar position in science in that his "tool" for scientific study is the same as his "object" of scientific study—the human organism. When both scientist and object are members of a common culture, it is often easy to take for granted certain environmental or social conditions as inevitable, rather than as peculiarities of that common culture. Legal systems, customs, mores, taboos, and sanctions may differ markedly from one culture to another. Objective comparison of various cultural systems, through cooperative research ventures with sociology and anthropology, has enabled the psychologist to understand better the role which these factors play in human development and behavior. In dealing with certain problems of juvenile delinquency, knowledge of socio-cultural systems may prove to be of great value. For

example, the Puerto Rican population of New York City has produced a disproportionate number of delinquent adolescents. The important role of cultural displacement and difficulties of the Puerto Rican youth in assimilating a new culture are often ignored in analyzing the sources of this increased frequency of delinquency among the Puerto Ricans.

The superficiality of much psychological research dealing with juvenile delinquency is disheartening. While the description of delinquents and delinquency is necessarily a first stage in analytic research, it appears that psychologists may have dwelled unprofitably long at this first level. Studies which report on the average age or range of delinquents, their areas of residence and ethnic characteristics, their socio-economic backgrounds, whether they are first, second, or third generation citizens, and so on, are essentially descriptive. They may be misleading in that they direct research attention away from analysis of the sources of these relationships in a causal sense. On the other hand, research studies which deal with a particular phenomenon of behavior, such as affectional identification with parents, susceptibility to group influence, response to social reinforcement, or impulsivity in behavior, and which attempt to analyze the developmental origins and behavioral consequences of such phenomena may contribute materially to scientific understanding of the negative abnormalities which constitute juvenile delinquency.

The exploration of individual differences may also contribute significantly to the analysis of delinquent behavior. Under certain circumstances, analysis of individual differences between categorically defined groups of human beings may provide only descriptive knowledge. For example, if a population of institutionalized delinquents and a population of noninstitutionalized high school students are compared on the incidence of homes broken by divorce or desertion, we may find that the delinquent population shows a significantly greater frequency. This observed correlation between delinquency and broken homes does not allow us to conclude that broken homes are the *cause* of delinquent behavior. There is no way of knowing, from this information, whether the relation will hold up under all possible variations of other conditions, or whether it may be due to some connection between both delinquency and broken

homes and an unidentified third variable. On the face of it, divorce and desertion seem simple concepts. But in fact divorce often clarifies and reduces the tensions in the home that lead up to it. Many persons, divorced, may become more satisfactory parents to their children than they were before divorce. For others, divorce may lead to increased tensions and handicapped execution of parental functions. Removal of one parent from the adolescent's home environment may eliminate negative influences in one case, leading to less likelihood of delinquency in the youth; but in another case it may eliminate positive influences, leading to increased likelihood of delinquent behavior. In other words, under some conditions, descriptive study of differences between populations or groups may not allow the researcher to put his finger precisely on the relevant variables. It is only with appropriate intensive follow-up investigation that the study of individual differences actually becomes a profitable avenue of research. It is this kind of follow-up which, unfortunately, is frequently lacking in psychological research.

#### ASOCIAL VERSUS ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR

A number of proposals may be advanced for improving and clarifying working definitions of juvenile delinquency for psychological research purposes. One advantageous step might be to draw a distinction between the *inability to control or inhibit impulses toward socially unacceptable acts* which stem from relatively normal motivational bases, and the *directly abnormal motivation to commit socially unacceptable acts*. In other words, *asocial* behavior may be distinguished from *antisocial* behavior.

Asocial behavior is socially unacceptable, and it results from a breakdown in socialization and acculturation of the individual. Accompanying this is his consequent failure to learn or to accept socially defined ethical and moral principles and standards for behavior, or to acquire normal techniques for regulating behavior through the inhibition of socially unacceptable acts and the substitution of acceptable acts in their stead. On the other hand, antisocial behavior may be defined as directed and intentional violation of socially defined standards for behavior, motivated by hostility toward the social system. The psychoanalytic approach has emphasized the antisocial aspects of delinquent and criminal behavior,

dealing with the delinquent offender as a juvenile rebel against established legal and social tradition. Asocial behavior has been but little considered as a separate category, more usually having been lumped together with antisocial behavior. In connection with this distinction it is interesting to note that the linguistic origin and central connotation of the word *delinquency* focuses on "failure of duty" or "offense through neglect," whereas *crime* is defined as "aggravated offense against morality." It may be profitable, from the psychological point of view, to deal with more precise definitions of "delinquency" (asocial behavior) and "criminality" (antisocial behavior) as conceptually independent phenomena.

#### *Asocial Behavior*

Socialization refers to the set of experiences, including purposeful training, through which infant and child go so as to become adult members of their society. The process is gradual: the infant begins to learn ways of behaving and experiencing which conform to the values of his society (for example, to sleep at night and to be awake during the day, to eat at set times, to inhibit toilet functions until the proper time and place). Certain ways of doing things and seeing things are encouraged by parents and other adults. Other modes of behavior are met by neutral reactions, and still others are actively discouraged. Actually, the child's repertory of behavior is narrowed considerably from what he is capable of doing: he inhibits some unacceptable ways of behaving and substitutes other actions designed to satisfy the original impulses.

The adolescent years, which involve the transition from the child to the adult role in society, represent a period of crisis in socialization. There are, in our culture, many factors which add to the complexity of this phase of development. There are profound discrepancies between adolescence in the 1960's and a century ago. In the nineteenth century there was almost no such thing as an adolescent; adolescence was certainly not the prolonged period that it is currently. Stringent taboos on sexual behavior were not enforced from age 12 to age 22 (as is often the case now) but only from age 12 to 16 or so. As soon as the youth was able to work and function as an adult he became an adult. There were virtually no truancy laws or child labor laws until comparatively recent years. The economy needed the participation of the entire

family: the adolescent had an important role, was needed, and belonged. Quite in contrast, the twentieth century has almost no place for the adolescent. He is denied the protection and exemption from responsibility characteristic of childhood, but he is also denied the rewards and privileges of adulthood. He is in a psychosocial "no man's land."

Delinquency may be one consequence of failure of socialization. Aggressive behavior may be considered as a case in point. The impulse toward aggression is considered by most psychologists to be a natural response to frustration, and in our culture it is inconceivable that a child could exist without being frustrated. One goal of socialization is to inhibit certain forms of aggression, such as physical assault upon the frustrator. Indeed, when the frustrating agent is a parent (as it often is), the child is in many families expected to inhibit entirely any open display of aggression. It may be that he is allowed to (or must) displace his aggressive impulse to some other object (such as a peer, a pet, or an inanimate object) or substitute other responses in the place of aggression (such as vigorous physical activity in competitive sports).

Aggression, linked as it is to delinquency and crime, has received much theoretical and research attention. Some perceive or experience frustration under circumstances not experienced by others as frustrating, and hence are more likely to be instigated to aggress. "Frustration tolerance" varies widely from person to person: one individual can be subjected to what would be judged severe frustration without giving vent to aggression or other maladaptive behavior (the "patience of Job"), while another person put in the same situation "blows his stack." The style of displacement of aggressive impulses has also received research attention: it is thought by some that aggression is handled intrapersonally in some instances (e.g., by developing indigestion or a stomach ulcer), while in other cases aggression is directly and even criminally acted out.

Bandura and Walters<sup>1</sup> have recently completed an exhaustive investigation of "antisocial aggression" in adolescent boys. This research is an excellent example of the kind of contribution to the analysis of delinquency which can be made by scientific psychology in its search for the laws and principles which govern human behavior and

<sup>1</sup>BANDURA & WALTERS, ADOLESCENT AGGRESSION (1959).

development. By means of various techniques of personality assessment, a group of highly aggressive boys was differentiated from a group of normally aggressive boys, and intensive direct interviews were carried out with the boys, their mothers, and their fathers. From careful analysis of data from these sources, an impressive body of evidence was assembled to support certain hypotheses about the origin and etiology of adolescent aggression. It appears that one of the major antecedents of adolescent aggression involves disruption of the normal dependency relationship of the young child upon the parent. A young boy's relationship with his father lacking warmth and affection, a father rejecting the son or spending little time in his company, a son seeking only rarely (or even resisting) help from his parents and other adults—these conditions were related to exaggerated adolescent aggression. Further study of other relationships revealed links between adolescent aggression and the boy's identification with his father, his development of conscience or internalized standards for controlling his own behavior, the parents' use of praise to reward good behavior and withdrawal of affection to punish misbehavior, and the boy's capacity for experiencing guilt following misbehavior—a network of relations which bears directly upon the issue of failures in control of aggressive impulses. These findings go beyond the description of differences between highly aggressive and normal adolescent boys. They allow the development of hypotheses about developmental processes which give rise to the occurrence of exaggerated aggressive behavior in adolescents.

At a general level, psychologists have also investigated the ability to inhibit the immediate gratification of any impulse, or the ability to experience delay between arousal of an impulse and attainment of its gratification. The human infant, for example, is rapidly "socialized" or trained to delay gratification of his hunger drive or need for food. While the new-born infant becomes hungry every two or three hours and demands immediate satisfaction, he acquires in a surprisingly short time the ability to sustain delay of several hours before attaining gratification. Psychologists assume that the ability to tolerate delayed gratification (or to "bind tension") of any impulse operates in much the same fashion. A recent study by Mischel<sup>2</sup> reports evidence to sug-

gest that the absence of the father from the home is related to the child's inability to tolerate delayed reward or gratification when offered by a male adult in an experimental setting. Other similar studies have shed light on the role of family dynamics in the socialization of the child. Nye<sup>3</sup> has undertaken a systematic and relatively thorough exploration of the relations between adolescent delinquency and particular indices of family structure and function. In a recently published study, Wagner<sup>4</sup> has explored the relation between certain aspects of parent-child interaction and the child's control of impulses. While even these studies leave large gaps of knowledge, they represent sound contributions to the growing body of systematic knowledge about family dynamics, child-rearing practices, and the ability to bind or control behavioral impulses.

Considerable recent research has been devoted to the development and function of "conscience" (the acquisition of internal, self-imposed standards of conduct as a device for controlling behavior). At the beginning of a child's life, most of the control of his behavior and activity comes from parents. They take note of what he does and express their approval or disapproval, usually on the basis of social or cultural standards which they have learned from *their* parents and others. Thus parents are forced to police the behavior of their child. Such direct parental control is essential, of course, in infancy and early childhood when the youngster is ill-equipped to cope with a complex environment. But such policing is not realistic, either for parent or for child, if continued indefinitely. The child must learn to control himself, to develop his own standards for deciding "right" and "wrong" with respect to his conduct. In other words, psychologists say, he must develop a conscience. *Conscience* refers simply to learned standards of conduct, acquired primarily from parents, but to some extent from other contacts with friends, teachers, or other agents of the culture. According to these standards, the child is able to instruct himself as to what he ought or ought not to do. Going counter to these self-instructions arouses feelings of guilt or shame, while behaving in accord with them arouses pride or self-satisfaction. A great deal of psychological research<sup>5</sup> on the development of conscience has

<sup>2</sup> NYE, FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR (1958).

<sup>3</sup> Wagner, *Developmental Aspects of Impulse Control*, 6 J. CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGY 537 (1960).

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Mussen & Distler, *Child-Rearing Antecedents of Masculine Identification in Kindergarten Boys*, 31

<sup>2</sup> Mischel, *Preference for Delayed Reinforcement: An Experimental Study of a Cultural Observation*, 56 J. ABNORMAL & SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 57 (1958).

revealed that conscience, appropriate sex-role identification, and regulation of impulse are closely interrelated and that all are related to certain kinds of interaction between the young child and his parents. The preponderant use of such disciplinary techniques as physical punishment and deprivation of privileges for misdeeds, as well as tangible rewards for good behavior, appear to retard the development of conscience. On the other hand, the use of verbal approval and affection as rewards for good behavior, and the withdrawal of these qualities in punishing misbehavior, appear to facilitate the development of conscience. Chronic rejection, coolness, or indifference toward the child also seem to interfere with the child's acquisition of internal controls. One study<sup>6</sup> has found that the use of severe physical punishment is one of five major factors associated with the development of delinquency in young boys.

In general, it is likely that obedience to authority and the meeting of externally imposed obligations do not necessarily indicate mature capacity for self-regulation of behavior. A child or adolescent may behave well in the presence of parents, teachers, or other authorities, but do so only because he fears the physical consequences of misbehaving or hopes to acquire a tangible reward for his good behavior. But such a child, when unable to control his behavior through the personal experience of guilt or pride, has no capacity for self-management or self-discipline when external sources of control or authority are not present.

The observation is often made that adolescent offenders appear most often to be the victims not of *uncontrollable* but of *uncontrolled* impulse. The essential difference between the boy who comes before a court and eventually faces commitment to a reformatory, and his counterpart who is a healthy leader in his high school class, appears very often to be one of capacity for self-control. The preponderance among adolescents of "crimes of impulse," such as assault, public disturbance, breaking and entering, and the like, as compared with "planned crimes," such as forgery, extortion, or premeditated murder, is readily apparent from available statistical data. Even in adolescent theft and larceny, the amount stolen is ordinarily small;

CHILD DEVELOPMENT 89 (1960); SEARS, MACCOBY & LEVIN, PATTERNS OF CHILD-REARING (1957). The general analysis of conscience and related empirical data discussed here are derived from the latter source.

<sup>6</sup> S. & E. T. GLUECK, UNRAVELLING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY (1950).

in adolescent automobile thefts, the car is very often taken for a brief joy-ride and then abandoned. Many of these juvenile offenses appear to be  *motiveless*, at least from any "sensible" viewpoint. Why should a boy break into a business to steal two dollars when he has five dollars at home or when he could earn as much in a few hours? Why should a boy steal an automobile for the simple satisfaction of riding around the block? The apparent lack of purpose in such adolescent offenses is evident only to those of us who almost automatically inhibit most of the reckless impulses that occur to all human beings. Many an adult may look at a powerful new convertible in a display window and fancy himself behind its wheel for a few moments. The annoyance one feels when someone tries to push ahead in a line of people waiting at a sales counter may arouse in all of us the urge to "take a poke at him." Delinquent adolescents appear to lack the capacity for inhibiting the overt expression of impulses of this sort through the experience of self-disapproval or anticipation of guilt feelings. Many delinquents appear to behave almost exclusively according to the dictates of external control and threatened punishment, rather than according to those of conscience or self-control. Anything goes—theft, assault, recklessness, vandalism—, or at least it goes until someone catches up to administer physical punishment. It is not that the delinquent is unaware of the punitive legal consequences of his misbehavior. Indeed, he may be more aware than the normal boy of the specific penalties for his offense *if* he is caught. Certainly he seems to have at least as adequate knowledge of "right-and-wrong" as the nondelinquent.<sup>7</sup> But the key to the problem is that he seems to operate under the conviction that *he* will *not* be caught. As long as the only force which can curb his impulsiveness is threat of external punishment, and as long as he remains convinced that he will not be caught so as to be punished, the delinquent has no means for inhibiting his impulse toward socially unacceptable behavior. Hence the impulse leads unchecked into criminal behavior.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Harris, *The Socialization of the Delinquent*, 19 CHILD DEVELOPMENT 143 (1948).

<sup>8</sup> SALISBURY, *THE SHOOK-UP GENERATION* (1958). Salisbury's discussions of the role of the twentieth century adolescent in society, the delinquent's assumption that he himself will not be caught and prosecuted, and the geo-social isolation of the urban adolescent are especially relevant to the consideration of such issues here. His observations are based upon his own direct experience as a social worker with New York City street-gangs.



The lack of conscience or self-control is regarded as relatively normal for the very young child, but the normal socialization process is expected to result in acquisition of conscience by the time of adolescence. Thus, the lack of this capacity in the adolescent is viewed as an abnormal consequence in development—a distortion of the normal socialization process. If the child psychologist, from such research studies as those mentioned here, can offer scientific accounts of the development and operation of conscience in normal socialization, he can contribute vitally to understanding its aberrational development or operation in juvenile delinquency.

#### *Antisocial Behavior*

The motives which underlie asocial behavior are fleeting and in most cases normal in the experience of most human beings. In the normally socialized individual, such motives would most likely be denied, but if accepted would be handled in a socially approved fashion, and perhaps with considerable delay of gratification of the impulse. In contrast, however, antisocial behavior may result from the operation of aberrant or distorted and exaggerated motivation. Responses which satisfy such motives threaten an orderly society.

Dependency and aggression are regarded as normal systems of behavioral motivation. But when such motivation occurs at an extremely intense level, or when the expression of such motives is wholly out of line with the tenets of society, they are regarded as abnormal. There is evidence from research<sup>9</sup> that both over-punishment and over-reward of dependent behavior intensify the impulse or need to be dependent. While extremely dependent behavior is rarely an overt component in the delinquent youth, it is often found that sudden or abrupt thwarting of strong dependency needs in adolescence may lead to undesirable over-reactions in the form of rebellion against authority and exaggerated (but insecure and artificial) independence. The abrupt frustration of strong needs for dependency, which many youths experience when their dependency, previously allowed, is too suddenly curbed, may bring about hostility toward those who have frustrated his dependency needs. Very easily, these hostile impulses may be displaced toward the gross society

<sup>9</sup> Goldman-Eisler, *The Problem of "Orality" and Its Origin in Early Childhood*, 97 J. MENTAL SCI. 765 (1951); SEARS, MACCOBY & LEVIN, *op. cit. supra* note 5, at 138-75.

as the perceived agent of this frustration. In combination with this, the ungratified dependency needs may be prematurely transferred away from parents to peers and age-mates, thus forming the nucleus of "gang" spirit. Such heightened dependency on peers may make the youth less docile with respect to parental and adult guidance as well as more susceptible to the influence of peers. If these peers, in turn, are delinquent, such a bond of emotional dependence almost guarantees contagion of delinquency to each group member.

In addition, consistently punished kinds of behavior (for example, in this culture, extreme aggressiveness) may lead to the acquisition of strong motivation toward that kind of behavior as an attention-getting device. The child who feels neglected and ignored except when he excites the attention of his parents by behaving in a manner which annoys them may come to behave in this fashion simply because the attention it commands is rewarding to him—a "rebel without a cause." In other cases, strongly punished behavior may acquire "adventure" and "excitement" value, leading to its chronic repetition. In fact, the so-called "conscienceless" child who operates principally in terms of external controls, including the anticipation of punishment if he is caught misbehaving, may eventually find great satisfaction in the experience of "getting away with" improper behavior—with taking advantage of or exerting manipulative power over others, yet evading punishment for this. Being able to commit an unacceptable act successfully and without being caught can become an important secondary or learned reward, linked to a corresponding learned motivational system. The juvenile delinquent typically has rather poor regard or esteem of himself, and such behavior may add to his status both in the eyes of his delinquent peers and in his own eyes.

Juvenile delinquents very often come from impoverished environments, not only in an economic sense but also in an intellectual and emotional sense. Personal relations within the family are often poor, either actively hostile or casual and diluted. The homes of delinquents are often barren and their neighborhoods short on facilities for constructive out-of-school occupation. School itself seldom provides satisfactory outlets or experiences of success for the delinquent. It is possible that many delinquent acts may spring directly from the frustration of boredom. One psychologist,

Hebb,<sup>10</sup> has suggested that a given kind of behavior can be reinforced not only by the reduction of tension or drive, but also, when the organism is understimulated, by an increase in stimulation. Such activities as hot-rod racing seem to be sought by many adolescents purely because of their exciting qualities—the increase in sensory stimulation which they provide. Other kinds of activity, including more directly delinquent or socially antagonistic activities, may provide similar satisfactions to bored and understimulated adolescents. In addition, boredom provides much time for fantasy, and psychological research<sup>11</sup> has revealed that socially unacceptable behavior is often preceded and accompanied by elaborate excesses of fantasy.

Phenomena such as these (exaggerated strength of ordinarily normal learned motivational systems, acquisition of abnormal motivation-reward systems, seeking excitement to relieve boredom and understimulation, or arousal of aberrant action-inciting fantasy in the absence of opportunities to behave constructively) may result in directly motivated behavior which offends the social order. It may be profitable to consider these phenomena as separate although overlapping conceptual issues from those involved in delinquency stemming from the inability to control normal behavioral impulses.

#### SOCIAL CONTROL OF BEHAVIOR

##### *Social Reinforcement*

In the socialization process, social or interpersonal reinforcement constitutes a powerful force in manipulating and shaping behavior. Reward may be administered in the form of social acceptance, display of affection, or verbal communication of approval; likewise, punishment may be dispensed in the form of social rejection or ostracism, withdrawal of affection, or verbal communication of disapproval. In one sense, social reinforcement and punishment function in the same manner as nonsocial or tangible reinforcement and punishment: both operate to satisfy motivational systems. Thus, they foster establishment and retention of behavior that leads to

reward or avoids punishment, and they discourage behavior that leads to punishment and loss of reward. Since such events of human interaction as social acceptance, expression of affection, or communication of approval do not themselves satisfy basic inborn needs of the human being, and since their value as rewards must be learned through experience, they are known as "secondary reinforcers." In general, the course of such learning involves sequential chaining of associations between various events. For example, for the infant, his mother's presence and physical contact come to be closely associated with gratification of basic needs, and as a consequence a motivational system or drive toward the attainment of love and affection arises. In later development, verbal approval or praise comes to represent love and affection, while disapproval and criticism indicate temporary withdrawal of affection. The child thus learns fairly early to value and seek the approval of others; he acquires and consolidates behavior which has this result, and he eliminates behavior which fails to secure approval or results in disapproval. It may be, in fact, that love-oriented techniques of control are superior in promoting socialization (in the sense of internalized control) because they induce the child to control his behavior in terms of interpersonal relations.

Aberrant patterns of experience during the child's social development, however, may retard or distort the acquisition of such regard and value for social approval. While most children experience rather full and tender satisfaction of their primary needs during infancy, receiving these satisfactions from a close family group, many children do not. The experience of both physicians and law enforcement personnel, especially in urban areas, indicates that brutal treatment of infants is by no means infrequent. Some children may be dealt with indifferently by their parents, or may for one reason or another be separated from their parents to live in an institutional setting. A substantial body of research<sup>12</sup> concerning the behavior of such children has accumulated. The conclusion emerges that "classical" institutional rearing of children (and practices in the home which resemble the limited and unusually cool or indifferent kinds of practice typical of the institutional setting) severely

<sup>10</sup> Hebb, *Drives and the Conceptual Nervous System*, 62 *PSYCHOLOGICAL REV.* 243 (1955).

<sup>11</sup> Mussen & Naylor, *The Relationships Between Overt and Fantasy Aggression*, 59 *J. ABNORMAL & SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY* 235 (1954); Purcell, *The TAT and Antisocial Behavior*, 20 *J. CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGY* 449 (1956).

<sup>12</sup> Goldfarb, *Psychological Privation in Infancy and Subsequent Adjustment*, 15 *AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY* 247 (1945); Lowrey, *Personality Distortion and Early Institutional Care*, 10 *AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY* 576 (1940).

retards socialization. That is, such youngsters commonly do not learn to value social reinforcement, and consequently do not develop or modify their behavior so as to gain it. Without regard for social reinforcement, the individual is not subject to one of the most important techniques of social control over behavior. He is unsocialized, and hence (theoretically) is free to perpetrate those delinquencies that he can manage without danger to himself. Research suggests that the probability for such youngsters to become delinquent is substantially higher than for the general population, and there is evidence as well that they are more subject to other kinds of neurotic, psychopathic, or psychotic maladjustments as adolescents and adults. McDavid and Schroder<sup>13</sup> compared a group of institutionalized delinquent boys with a similar group of noninstitutionalized high school boys and found the delinquent boys to be strikingly less sensitive to statements of verbal praise or criticism than the nondelinquent boys. In a test designed to gauge the extent to which verbal approval (or disapproval) from an adult elevated (or depressed) the boy's own evaluation of himself and his ability, the nondelinquent boys "assimilated" social reinforcement at face value significantly more often than did the delinquent boys.

Although research studies such as these may contribute eventually to the analysis of the origins of delinquent behavior, psychology still has only spotty information about the child-rearing practices that enhance or detract from the effectiveness of adult approval on children's behavior. The important questions about the specific socialization processes which are involved remain partially unanswered.

A particularly important issue to be explored concerns the relative effectiveness of peer approval, as contrasted with adult approval, for the juvenile delinquent. In the early stages of development, the child's close interpersonal contacts are mostly restricted to interaction with his family. Thus, parental approval is ordinarily the most important kind of social reinforcement during early development. As the child grows older, however, his scope of interaction broadens, and by the time he starts to school he has developed a high regard for approval from his peers and playmates. Gradually the value of peer approval approaches that of parental approval, so that during adolescence the youth

may experience marked difficulty due to the competing value of peer and adult approval as reinforcers. By the time the individual reaches adulthood, parents usually come to be regarded in a restructured way as a rather special kind of peer, so that peer approval is effectively paramount in influencing behavior.

Social reinforcement may operate either at the specific level, in terms of approval from specified sources such as parents or other highly regarded individuals, or at the general level, in terms of acceptance by a group of people. Effective specific sources of social approval may include many individuals other than parents. For example, in early adolescence especially, a child may come to have high regard or "hero worship" for an older adolescent. He may try assiduously to behave in such a way as to gain and retain the approval of this hero, valuing this approval above other sources of reinforcement. But social reinforcement may also occur in terms of a group. Usually, though not always, peer reinforcement operates more effectively through generalized group acceptance than through specific delivery of personal approval or disapproval. When a child reaches school age and begins to move into expanded contacts with groups of age-mates, he rapidly learns to value highly the satisfaction of belonging to such groups and becomes acutely motivated to gain the acceptance of his peers. He soon learns that acceptance into the peer group is contingent upon his behaving in certain specified ways, and consequently his behavior is subject to manipulation through social acceptance or rejection by his peers.

#### *Social Influence*

The modulation or shaping of behavior through observation of how other people behave, including those forms of behavior frequently described as imitation, suggestion, conformity, compliance, and so on, may be categorically referred to as *social influence*. Social reinforcement and the operation of social influence are closely related, for in its most potent form social influence usually occurs under conditions of social reinforcement. Of course, similar social influence of behavior may occur in the quest for nonsocial rewards, as where the source of influence is in a position of expertise or authority to mediate in the attainment of tangible rewards.

The phenomenon of *identification* is largely subject to the operation of social influence in conjunction with social reinforcement. Children learn very

<sup>13</sup> McDavid & Schroder, *The Interpretation of Approval and Disapproval by Delinquent and Nondelinquent Adolescents*, 25 J. PERSONALITY 539 (1957).

early that behaving like the same-sexed parent usually elicits parental approval and affection and generally elicits greater approval, both inside and outside the family, than does behaving like the opposite-sexed parent. Thus the learning of specific adult behavioral roles according to sex is a consequence of one kind of identification. Similarly, when an adolescent selects an older youth as an object of hero-worship, he is likely to adopt the behavior of the hero, imitating him in order to gain his recognition and approval. Just as young children learn to adopt the behavioral standards of their parents, learning eventually to experience self-approval when they behave according to these standards, so may the adolescent youth adopt the behavioral standards of older heroes and follow them even when the hero is not present to administer direct approval or acceptance. It may be that mass media heroes, such as comic strip characters or television heroes, influence the behavior of children and adolescents in such a fashion. It often seems, in examining the behavior of, for example, teen-age fan clubs, that members of the group reinforce each other for behavior conceived as similar to or approved by the common hero. It is possible that simultaneous subscription to a common ideal, coupled with mutual reinforcement for dedication to this ideal, operates to increase interpersonal bonds in the group situation and, indeed, can lead eventually into mob-type behavior.

Research suggests that the value of peer approval and susceptibility to peer influence reaches its peak importance during adolescence. Difficulties result when requirements for peer acceptance contradict or conflict with requirements for adult approval. Fashions in dress or personal appearance (such as black leather jackets, motorcycle boots, and ducktail haircuts) may be so important in gaining peer approval that an adolescent is willing to sacrifice the approval of his parents to gain that of his peers, and thus he adopts such styles. To the extent that the interpersonal relation between the youth and his parents has been deviant or disturbed in some way, the experiences which lead to the acquisition of high regard for parental approval may be lacking. As a consequence, his behavior may be much more subject to modulation by the quest for peer reinforcement than for parental reward. Such a child may then be handicapped in incorporating parental standards and values and may fail to acquire the capacity for self-disapproval and guilt which go to make up

effective conscience. The vestigial conscience acquired under conditions of restricted or diluted parental identification may suffice to keep the youth a law abiding citizen when alone and untempted, but when caught up in the influence of the peer group, he may easily and happily shrug off his guilt and go along with the dictates of his group.

In the normal course of human development, both peer influence and peer reinforcement play directly constructive roles in the socialization process. The peer group functions as an agent of the culture or adult society, and many of the customs, traditions, and standards of the existing culture are communicated to the child through his contacts with peers. Thus, a "healthy" peer group contributes directly to the "healthy" socialization process. But socialization within an unassimilated social sub-system or subgroup may in some cases be incongruent with the majority or general social system of the culture. The youth who grows up within a deviant minority social system may learn an inappropriate set of values and standards, although the basic psychological dynamics of his social development may not themselves be aberrant. The processes through which adolescent delinquent gangs operate are not in themselves abnormal; they are simply distortions of normal group dynamics. Communication of skills occurs in almost all groups, whether this involves teaching the member how to make a soap-box racer or a zip-gun. The punishment of deviation from group norms occurs whether it involves ostracism for cheating at a game, punished by paddling or name-calling, or ostracism for "stooling to the cops," punished by violent physical assault and even murder. The rites of admission to the Boy Scouts or DeMolay involve relatively formal rituals that probably serve the same dynamic purpose as the rituals of an urban street gang. Both may require the demonstration of prowess or achievement, whether this be earning merit badges in the Boy Scouts, or achieving status in the gang by a successful assault or rape.

Breakdowns or aberrances in these aspects of the socialization process not only communicate deviant or conflicting standards for behavior, but they also fail to communicate existing standards of the larger culture. While it may not necessarily be regarded as a *major* etiological factor in delinquency, such default in socialization (failure to learn the dominant mores and standards) may

handicap the youth through his ignorance of standards for socially acceptable behavior.

It is probable that the substandard urban ghettos which harbor delinquency cultivate the emergence of social subsystems such as these among adolescents. The existence of "gangs" among delinquent youths in large cities is the consequence of natural social processes among human beings. Affectional poverty and restriction of parent-child interaction often interfere with the development of normal adult-child relationships, parental identification, and the development of conscience, and lead into increased investment in peer approval and heightened susceptibility to peer standards. A lack of physical mobility often characterizes the adolescent in large cities, so that he is isolated within a geographically limited world of experience. (Many adolescents in Brooklyn have never been across the river to Manhattan, a few miles away.) Homogeneity of ethnic and national groups facilitates the strengthening of group ties and the freezing of group boundaries. Such factors should, according to assumed psychological principles, foster the emergence of tightly knit adolescent subsystems or gangs. Unfortunately, the explicit scientific verification of logical speculations such as these is yet to be achieved. While current knowledge of correlational association between juvenile delinquency and the socio-economic level, residence in public housing projects, broken homes, and other factors supports such an analysis, adequate research to document such psychological explanations needs to be undertaken.

The emergence of social subsystems among delinquents may not only interfere with normal socialization and social learning, but it may also be closely associated with rejection of the dominant social system by the adolescent and, vice versa, with the adolescent's feeling that he is rejected by the dominant social system. There is psychological evidence indicating that anticipated acceptance by a social group increases the likelihood of social influence within that group, and conversely, that anticipated rejection decreases the likelihood of social influence.<sup>14</sup> If the adolescent delinquent sees little or no chance of being accepted by better-controlled and more conventional members of the total society, and if he sees relatively greater

probability of acceptance within the deviant subsystem, he may go to great lengths to demonstrate flamboyantly his rejection of one system (and its standards) and acceptance of the other. Research evidence suggests that at least the first of these conditions—anticipated rejection by the majority group—exists for delinquent and pre-delinquent youth.<sup>15</sup>

#### THERAPY AND CONTROL OF DELINQUENCY

The treatment and social control of juvenile delinquency are the shared task of many agencies, including law-enforcement officers, teachers, social workers, psychiatrists, and clinical psychologists. The nature of function and kinds of control which each of these groups can most appropriately execute differ widely. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of each can be facilitated through the recognition and application of available psychological knowledge bearing on delinquency.

The effectiveness of law-enforcement agencies in controlling delinquency is limited in the sense that they must ordinarily deal with delinquency "after-the-fact" rather than in a "preventive" way. It is largely through the threat of punishment that law-enforcement groups can help prevent delinquency. Current popular literature frequently suggests that delinquency may be curbed by increasing the stringency of legal punishment for adolescent offenses. In the light of psychological knowledge of delinquency, however, the potential value of such procedures must be evaluated conservatively. If, indeed, delinquent behavior is in part the consequence of a youth's reliance upon external physical reward and punishment for behavioral control (in contrast to reliance upon internal standards and conscience), and if the delinquent operates largely under the assumption that he will not be caught, an increase in the severity of threatened punishment may contribute little to the correction of his delinquent behavior. Severe punishment may merely strengthen the offender's intent to see that he is not caught again in the future. Furthermore, the satisfaction of escaping severe punishment through *not* being

<sup>14</sup> Dittes & Kelley, *Effects of Different Conditions of Acceptance Upon Conformity to Group Norms*, 53 J. ABNORMAL & SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 100 (1956).

<sup>15</sup> McGuire, White & Novak, *Adolescent Role Behavior and Age-Mate Acceptance* (mimeographed paper presented at meetings of the Southwestern Social Science Ass'n in Dallas, Texas, April 1954). This material has subsequently been incorporated into the final report of the Human Talent Research Project entitled *TALENTED BEHAVIOR IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS*, University of Texas Library, Austin 12, Texas.

caught may acquire more secondary reward value for the delinquent youth than escaping mild punishment. This is not to suggest, of course, that rigorous and consistent law enforcement is completely ineffective in the control of delinquency. Such rigor may discourage the "I won't get caught" assumption. That is, to the extent that the society can police the activity of its delinquent or unsocialized members and increase the probability that the offender will be caught and punished, delinquent behavior may be discouraged. But the broadcast of hollow threats or loud publication of *intent alone* are likely to be ineffective. In any event, high levels of police activity are not only extravagant and costly, they are basically contradictory to the fundamental philosophical and political assumptions of a democratic government. By no means does police activity guarantee a stable society. Such measures provide only symptomatic relief and control of the occurrence of overt delinquency; they do not attack the etiology and roots of delinquency.

Social welfare programs designed to relieve harsh economic and social conditions have probably been constructive in alleviating factors associated with the origins of delinquency. But the improvement of social conditions in a neighborhood has not been found to follow automatically upon improvement of physical conditions. Material improvement, such as the erection of large public housing projects, may bring about genuine social improvement in one case, but in another case the resultant disruption of neighborhood ties and injection of artificial geo-social boundaries can conceivably be socially destructive. The provision of recreational facilities and supervised centers for adolescents by the Y.M.C.A., Police Athletic League, and other agencies may contribute to the control of delinquency, not so much through "keeping the kids off the street," but rather through providing facilities which adolescents need, want, and value—supporting rather than thwarting the normal adolescent's desire to engage in activities with his peers. Essentially, the *manner* in which social welfare measures are introduced may be more important than the material value of such measures. It is important to recognize the psychological impact of such programs upon the people to whom they are offered.

The "street-club worker" approach to the control of delinquency shows promise as a preventive device. Usually a trained social worker, the "club-

worker" seeks acceptance by the adolescent group and cultivates the trust and friendship of its members. He does not seek to thwart or disorganize the adolescent group but, instead, to reshape it and redirect its collective activities away from "bopping" or gang-fighting toward more constructive efforts in athletics and other acceptable organized activities. Such approaches, which recognize the normality of motives and social phenomena within the delinquent street gang and channel rather than attempt to suppress them, have met with reasonable success in the control of juvenile misbehavior.

Because juvenile delinquency represents a diffuse and pervasive syndrome within the personality structure of the adolescent, actual psychological therapy may be a necessary technique for the control of delinquency. Unfortunately, the degree of training required for capable administration of such therapy keeps its cost at a level beyond the access of most delinquent adolescents. Only the upper or upper-middle class delinquent is likely to be referred for psychiatric aid when he first experiences a brush with the law. Governmental employment of psychiatrists and clinical psychologists for work with delinquents is expensive, and even today relatively few communities offer psychological out-patient care on a charity basis.

Because of reduced cost, group techniques in therapy hold promise in the effort to control delinquency. In addition, because the etiology of juvenile delinquency is founded in social learning and development, the use of group therapy may have special advantages. The opportunity for controlled and directed experience with an accepting (or at least, non-condemning) adult therapist and with peers in the presence of this adult may be particularly favorable to the successful modification and reshaping of personality and reversal or eradication of the misdirected social learning which has occurred earlier in the delinquent's experience.

While psychological research is but one of several approaches to the study of delinquency and crime, all approaches to this common problem are closely interrelated. Recognizing implicitly the contributions which other approaches to the analysis of juvenile delinquency have made to psychology, this paper represents the child psychologist's attempt to evaluate explicitly the kinds of contributions his endeavor may make to the understanding, control, and therapy of

adolescent delinquent behavior. Through the assiduous collection of empirical evidence, scientific psychology aspires to formulate theoretical laws and principles which govern human development. Such knowledge, then, affords greater understanding of abnormalities and aberrances in human development. The accumulation of reliable

scientific evidence concerning the etiology of delinquency has been disappointingly slow, but there is evidence of significant present attainment in this area, and there is basis for optimistic predictions about the importance of future psychological contributions to solution of the problems of juvenile delinquency.